

Childhood mementos—some cheery, others a bit creepy—are endemic in Pierre Ardouvin’s oeuvre. For his first solo show in Los Angeles, the French artist presents a selection of new and recent works in which youthful delights like toys, costume jewelry, carnival rides, playground equipment, and family vacations factor prominently. Featuring watercolors of stuffed animals, plastic figurine assemblages, and spectacular room-filling installations—notably the show’s title work, *Ohlala*, 2013, which evokes the pride and trauma of losing a tooth—this exhibition is an ode to a more innocent time.

Among the most recent works on view, Ardouvin’s “Phrase” paintings (2018-19) are sensitive watercolor renderings of well-loved (but inevitably discarded) playthings. Like the famous sled in Orson Wells’ *Citizen Kane*, each fuzzy animal, miniature car, and limp marionette that Ardouvin paints is a “Rosebud.” These nostalgia triggers, which appear individually and in pairs against a blank background, are simultaneously haunting and huggable. Similarly, poignant, if a bit livelier, are two small sculptures made from actual toys. Mounted on rotating mirrored bases, the bedazzled assemblages—*The story makes no sense. Very disappointed* and *A lot of fiction is intensely nostalgic* (both 2014)—twinkle as they slowly spin round and round. Surprisingly soulful, these glitzy sculptures are like totems from the realm of make-believe.

Other glittering impressions of halcyon times include two much larger sculptures. *Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris (And never do I weep and never do I laugh)*, 2019, a stoic and graceful merry-go-round swan imprisoned in a gilded metal cage, is an arresting monument to bygone amusements. While, *La tête en bas (Upside down)*, 2018, a mass of costume jewelry suspended above a large dark carpet silk-screened with an image of a gaping chasm, presents a topsy-turvy take on the fantasy of digging to find buried treasure.

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Scattered throughout the gallery, works from Ardouvin’s “Screen Savers” series (2012-ongoing), are based on vintage postcards, which the artist collages, paints, scans, enlarges, prints and then covers with glitter-infused resin. The resulting surreal landscapes include French chateaux invaded by shadowy jellyfish and a placid mountain lake haunted by a strange underwater creature. The inextricable mixture of reality and fantasy found in these images—and throughout Ardouvin’s work—is precisely what makes his evocations of childhood resonate so deeply.

— Mara Hoberman

P R A Z
D E L A V A L L A D E

Since the 1990's, Pierre Ardouvin (b. 1955, FR) has steadily cultivated a reflection on popular culture's utopic vernacular and the fate of its ritual consumption of commodities—spanning industries, class relationships and identities. Ardouvin's astute use of appropriation and re-presentation of everyday objects exercises a poetic scrutiny of individual and collective psyches. Ardouvin's multidisciplinary undertaking challenges the credibility of archetypes with playful and poignant installations, environments, assemblages, collages and drawings. Pierre Ardouvin's works have been shown at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris), the MAC/VAL (Vitry), the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Fondation Jumex (Mexico), the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), the NMCA (Seoul) and are represented in numerous public and private collections internationally. Pierre Ardouvin has numerous monographic catalogues including *Retour d'Abyssinie*, published by La Banque in 2018; *Helpless*, by Villa Saint Clair Editions published in 2015; *Eschatologic Park*, published by Les Presses du Réel in 2010.

Pierre Ardouvin: *Ohlala* is on view at 6150 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles from 16 March 2018 through 11 May 2019, Tuesday through Saturday, from 11:00am to 6:00pm. Complimentary parking is available at the lot adjacent to the gallery. For more information please contact Anthony Salvador at 323-917-5044 or anthony@praz-delavallade.com.

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